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ABSTRACT

This research, part of a larger study that explores how a guided case writing experience supports a teacher's professional growth, examines the tensions that occurred as one teacher's case became a less personal and more public document. The study sought to discover precisely what processes and experiences contributed to the profound impact that the case writing had. As the writer revised the narrative through dialogues with the editor and other case writers, a kind of writing imperative was created that retroactively transformed the teaching experience into teacher research and led to profound learning and professional growth. As the case writer reconstructed and reconstituted these experiences, they become the focus of systematic research. Data suggest that three kinds of questions appear to be most important in stimulating deep, reflective thinking: examination of how the problems, topics, or issues depicted in the narrative are representative of situations that arise with some frequency in other situations; a concern for other audiences, which pushes the case writer to think like a teacher about the case as a lesson or curriculum; and breakdowns in the classroom, the problematics which create opportunities for learning. The paper concludes with recommendations for using case writing in both preservice and inservice settings. (Contains 35 references.) (JDD)

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The Editorial Imperative

Responding to Productive Tensions Between Case Writing and Individual Development

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October 1994

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The Editorial Imperative

Responding to Productive Tensions Between Case Writing and Individual Development

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October 1994

Abstract

This research is part of a larger study that explores how a guided case writing experience supports a teacher's professional growth. It was conducted over a year-long period during which teachers and teacher educators worked together to create a collection of cases on the dilemmas of doing groupwork. The teacher-authors were involved in composing and revising case drafts, and discussed their narratives in both editor/writer conferences and collaborative conversations with a small group of case writers. The paper examines, in detail, the tensions that occurred during one teacher's experience to discover precisely what processes and experiences contributed to the profound impact that this teacher reported six months after she had finished her case.

What becomes clear in this careful analysis of case writing is that there is a kind of writing imperative, which retroactively transforms the teacher experience into teacher research. As the author reconstructs and reconstitutes these experiences, they become the focus of systematic research. The data suggests that three kinds of questions appear to be most important in stimulating deep, reflective thinking. They focus on: 1) "What is this a case of?," which refers to how the problems, topics or issues depicted in the narrative are representative of situations that arise with some frequency in other situations; 2) a concern for other audiences, which pushes the case writer to think like a teacher about the case as a lesson or curriculum; and 3) breakdowns in the classroom, the problematics which create opportunities for learning.

The Editorial Imperative:

Responding to Productive Tensions Between Case Writing and Individual Development[1]

Judith Shulman, Far West Laboratory

with

Diane Kepner, Mt. Diablo School District

In earlier writings, I have presented a developmental model of case writing that describes how a case moves from the individual experience of a single teacher to the shared experience of a community of educators. If the goal of case development in education is to promote the opportunity for many others to learn from the experience of an individual, the movement from private to public is critical. But two central questions arise: As case writers shift from writing for their own benefit to writing for the sake of an external audience, does this shift of purpose and focus increase or decrease the opportunities for the case writer's own learning? Or does a teacher's learning depend less on the intended audience than on other more specifically contextual factors? The purpose of this paper is to explore how a guided case writing experience can affect a teacher's professional development, especially as the case becomes a less personal and more public document.

I begin with a review of the research on case-based teaching and its relation to the growing interest in teacher-generated research. After describing my criteria for a teaching case, I explore a number of tensions created during the case writing process and examine their impact on the case author's professional growth. I conclude with a set of recommendations for using case writing in both preservice and inservice settings.

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[1] We would like to thank Carne Barnett, Nikola Filby, Diane Gillespie, and Lee Shulman for their comments on this paper.

Background

For the past few years, teacher educators and scholars have paid increased attention to case-based teaching as a way to reform teacher education and professional development (L. Shulman, 1987; Sykes & Bird, 1992; Kagan, 1993). Rather than separating theory and practice as typically occurs in teacher preparation programs, learning with cases bridges the gap between these domains. It involves acting, reflecting, and deliberating on problematic situations in the real world of practice, often testing theoretical propositions and/or generating new ones. Researchers argue that analysis and discussion of well-conceived cases may prepare prospective teachers to become problem-solvers who pose questions, explore multiple perspectives, and examine alternative solutions (e.g., Merseth, 1991; Kleinfeld, 1991; J. Shulman, 1992a). In short, case-based teaching methods can help neophytes learn to think like a teacher. This represents a radical departure to traditional approaches to teacher preparation (Sykes & Bird, 1992).

Concurrent with the interest in using cases is a growing movement toward teacher research and investigation, empowering teachers both to improve their practice and communicate their knowledge from an "insider's" perspective to other educators (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Richardson, 1994; Hollingsworth & Sockett, in press). This link between case-based teaching and teacher research sets the context for a program of research and development in the Institute for Case Development and Teacher Research at Far West Laboratory. The institute's program stems from a commitment to supporting teachers to contribute to the literature on teaching and enabling others to learn from their experience.

Unlike most case writers who are themselves teacher educators and researchers (e.g., Silverman, Welty & Lyon, 1992; Greenwood & Parkay, 1989; Kowalski, Weaver & Hensen, 1990), my colleagues and I have been collaborating with teachers to develop teacher-authored cases in thematic casebooks (Shulman & Colbert, 1987, 1988; Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1993; Barnett, Goldenstein & Jackson, 1994), which we use in preservice, inservice, and graduate education. We have studied how teachers and editors work together in collaboration to develop cases (Shulman, Colbert, Kemper & Dmytriw, 1990; J. Shulman, 1991). We have also examined how casebooks are organized (Shulman & Colbert, 1989), and how case discussions impact teachers' beliefs and practices (J. Shulman, 1992a; Barnett, 1991; Barnett & Tyson,

1993a, 1993b). I will argue in this paper that a guided case writing experience is a form of investigation that can lead to powerful opportunities for professional growth.

The cases that we publish are original, carefully crafted, teacher-written accounts of classroom incidents. These cases are not simply stories that a teacher might tell. They are crafted into compelling narratives and situated in an event or series of events that unfold over time. They have a plot that is problem-focused with some dramatic tension that must be relieved. They are embedded with many problems that can be framed and analyzed from various perspectives, and they include the thoughts and feelings of the teacher-writers as they render their accounts. And they include reflective comments that examine what the authors have learned from the experience and/or what they may do differently in another situation.

All stories are not cases. To call something a case is to make a theoretical claim that it is a "case of something" or an instance of a larger class (L. Shulman, 1986, p. 11). This is not to say that all cases illustrate, exemplify or teach a theoretical principle. Cases are usually accounts of practical or strategic dilemmas that confront a teacher. To be valuable as a case, however, the narrative should be representative of a class or type of dilemma, problem or quandary that arises with some frequency in teaching situations. Asking "What is this a case of?" is central to my collaborative inquiry with the teacher-authors. We develop a shared understanding of what the case has taught the writer and could potentially teach others, and then identify which details of the story may be critical for understanding its meaning and those that are irrelevant.

Elsewhere, I have proposed a developmental model of the evolution of a narrative from a teacher's story to a teaching case: from 1) the *initial experience* that is perceived as meaningful; through 2) the *reflective experience* during which the experience is developed into a written narrative; to 3) the *reciprocal or deliberative experience*, when the writer revises the narrative through dialogues with the editor and other case writers; and finally, to 4) the *collective experience*, where the case becomes public property through layers of commentaries by other educators and/or through broader discussions among a widening circle of peers (J. Shulman, 1992b). In this paper, I focus on *Stage 3* of the model, the *reciprocal or deliberative experience*, and explore how tensions between a case writer, editor, and other case writers influence the author's professional growth. I argue that when these conversations focus on issues such as "What is this a case of?," a concern for other audiences and breakdowns in the classroom, a kind

of writing imperative is created that retroactively transforms the teaching experience into teacher research. In short, as teachers reconstruct and reconstitute these experiences, they become a focus of systematic investigation and can lead to profound learning and professional growth.

The Study

The research presented here is part of a larger study that explores how case writing supports teachers' professional development and the formation of learning communities. It was conducted over a year-long period during which teachers and teacher educators worked together to create a collection of cases on the dilemmas of using groupwork (Shulman, Lotan & Whitcomb, in progress). Our task was to create a set of cases that would engage teachers who read the cases in an analysis of why and how to use groupwork, to challenge some of their assumptions and beliefs about appropriate uses of groupwork, and to broaden their repertoire of strategies for planning and implementing effective group tasks. We hoped that our disparate lenses would contribute to a richer understanding of each case: Lotan is an experienced scholar and staff developer on groupwork; Whitcomb is a scholar who studies the effect of writing on conceptual development[2]; and I bring experience collaborating with teachers to develop teaching cases.

The study followed a group of 15 experienced Bay Area teachers through the case writing process. They were selected from a pool of invited teachers, and represented a range of ethnicities, content specialties, grade levels, and models of groupwork (see Appendix A). Most of the teachers taught in culturally diverse, urban settings where students considered "at-risk" predominated their classrooms. Since one of our research interests was how case writing might affect the norms of communication among faculty at a particular school, we selected several teachers who taught together at the same site — two from one middle school and three from an elementary school.

The writing experience began with a day-long retreat during which teachers participated in a case discussion, analyzed the narrative components of a "case," and launched their own case through reflective writing and discussion (see Whitcomb, 1994, and J. Shulman, 1992a, for more detail on this introductory seminar). During the ensuing months, teachers were involved in

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[2] Whitcomb is investigating aspects of teacher learning during this project for her doctoral dissertation.

composing and revising case drafts. They participated in at least two editor/writer conferences and at least two collaborative conversations where small groups of case writers discussed their drafts with one another. Several teachers had additional conversations with one or more of the editors, and case writers from the same site reported that they often spoke informally to one another about their cases. After the final drafts were submitted, a professional editor revised each case and returned the narrative to the case writer for approval.

The data consists of 15 case drafts; written feedback for each case by two editors; audiotapes and verbatim transcripts of editor/writer conferences, collaborative conversations among teachers, and interviews with the whole group and with a sample of teachers; and periodic freewrites and research memos. Analysis of case drafts was on-going as the editors met regularly throughout the writing process to discuss individual texts and planned appropriate feedback for each writer. Data analysis began after most of the final drafts were submitted (see Whitcomb, 1994; Whitcomb, in progress; Lotan, 1994; and Rutherford, Ash & Walker, 1994). For this paper, I examined memos; transcripts of selected interviews, editor-writer conferences and collaborative conversations; and sections of selected audiotapes.

Although our primary goal for this and previous case writing projects is to produce a body of analytic narratives from which others can learn, most teacher-authors have reported that the case writing process had a strong impact on their professional life. They describe changes in how they think about their teaching and students, on their strategies and modes of instruction, and on the ways in which they interact with colleagues about their experiences (J. Shulman, 1992a; Shulman & Colbert, 1987, 1988; Barnett & Tyson, 1993a). What sorts of things promote this kind of professional growth? My initial research questions included: Are there particular kinds of questions that seem most helpful? What is the influence of editor-writer conferences as compared to collaborative conversations with peers? What happens when feedback from different sources conflict? Are there circumstances in which the goal of developing publishable cases hinders opportunities for individual learning?

I address these questions by examining in detail the tensions that occurred during one teacher's experience, to discover precisely what processes and experiences might contribute to the kinds of learning I witnessed in earlier projects. My focus on this particular teacher, Diane Kepner, was shaped during the data analysis for the preparation of this paper. Though most of

the cases stimulated productive tensions that resulted in professional growth for both the case writers and the editors, I noted that Diane's case particularly challenged both my conception of "case" and my style of providing editor-writer feedback (see below). As often happens in many kinds of research, my research questions changed to include my own learning as well as that of the case writer's. I therefore added an interview six months after the project ended and subsequently asked Diane to write a section after the first draft was completed (see epilogue). The result is a richer data set for Diane than for the others because, for the first time, we have information on how a case writing experience impacts an author a year after the case is completed.

The Case in Point

Diane, a 15-year veteran in the Mt. Diablo School District, is a very skilled and thoughtful 7th grade core language arts and social studies teacher. She was well known to Lotan and Whitcomb because she participated in a previous research study on teaching with groupwork. During the period in which she worked on this case, Diane was in the midst of a year's leave of absence to pursue a masters degree at Stanford and work for the Complex Instruction (CI) Program. Her case, "We're All In This Together," portrays a compelling, often poignant, story of Diane's first-year, ambivalent journey transforming her predominantly teacher-directed class into one in which students took greater responsibility for their own and one another's learning. In the next section, I summarize the first draft of this case and use quotes from this draft.

"We're All In This Together"

For years, Diane had used group activities extensively, but had never thought much about whether kids would learn better this way. She believed that all of the <u>real</u> learning in her class was filtered through her, and only used groupwork for novelty and because it was trendy. But she was dissatisfied with the results of the activities she planned. Only a handful of the students participated successfully no matter how she organized the tasks, while the others were either ignored or sat back and watched the leaders do most of the work. Diane's conception and organization of group tasks dramatically changed after attending a workshop on CI:

> *Learning about multiple abilities redefined my ideas about the nature of group tasks and gave me a new curriculum that engaged students in new ways. It required everyone in the group to pool their resources in order to investigate difficult primary source evidence and present their findings in creative engaging ways. These tasks were designed so not even the best traditional students could successfully complete them by themselves and there was no taking it home to allow one person to try to monopolize the final product. Now they really needed each other, and once they learned I was not going to solve their problems, they became more willing to take on the responsibilities for themselves. (first draft)*

The core of her narrative vividly describes several episodes during Diane's rocky first year as she struggled to implement some of the CI group tasks and her ambivalence with her changing role from directive teacher to facilitator. While many students appeared to enjoy the group tasks, some had continuous problems as they struggled to accommodate this new way of learning. Christi was one of these:

> *Christi probably wants to be a teacher when she grows up. I can tell by the way she enjoys being in authority, organizing others, being the expert. Whatever needs to be done, I know I can count on Christi. I see a lot of myself as a 7th grader in her. That's why I was so totally unprepared for her reaction to the new form of groupwork. I would have reacted the same way. Suddenly this child, who had never given me any problems, who had even accepted criticism from me with a smile, suddenly my right-hand angel is throwing temper tantrums and putting not only her group but the whole classroom into turmoil. What is happening to Christi?*

In the old groupwork settings, Christi often took charge, did more work than the others, and was rewarded for knowing more during final presentations. In CI groups, however, these same behaviors were considered bossy and overbearing, and she caused problems in every group she was in. It appeared as if the increasing interdependence demanded by CI tasks "pulled the rug right out from Christi's security."

Roberto was one of those who appeared to thrive in the new group tasks. He had recently been moved from a bilingual class and was failing because he had not handed in work. But with the aid of skillful interventions from Diane, he began to participate and talk more in his group, his language skills improved, his contributions increased, "and he even volunteered to read aloud in front of the group."

As the year progressed, Diane noticed that when the students assumed more responsibility for their own learning, they produced better work. Some low-achieving students, like Lisa,

Jerome, and Shirley, seemed to enjoy their recognition for artistic and/or dramatic abilities, and were in constant demand to use these skills. Others, however, like Bobby and Aaron, continued to have problems. Bobby was popular, athletic, academically insecure, and he hated groups. His peers expected him to take charge like he did on the football field, and he couldn't handle it. There were arguments, accusations, and blaming until, often, very little got done in his group. Aaron, on the other hand, was generally an isolate in his group and played with little toys behind his book bag. When Diane realized that he was bright, she tried to create more opportunities for his abilities to become evident, as she had done with Roberto. But one day, after pointing out to his group that something Aaron had said was really pertinent to the task, Tran Pham spoke up in exasperation, "He just sits there and knows things and he'll never help us or tell us unless he sees you watching or you come along."

Christi's problems seemed to escalate as the year drew to a close. Though she excelled when she was called upon to do something on her own, she continued to cause friction in groups. It was particularly obvious during one occasion when she and Bobby were teamed with Roberto, and they ignored Roberto's valuable suggestions that would have improved their assignment. Increasingly, Diane removed Christi from an activity, especially when her tears and tantrums were clearly destructive. But Diane wondered if she had fueled the situation by giving it so much attention because of her own need, like Christi's, to be the center of attention.

On the last day of groupwork, Diane pulled Christi out of her final skit project for being obstinate and refused to let her rejoin the group, saying it was too late this time:

> *I know she understood. Tears filled her eyes and she put her head down on the desk and silently sobbed. A little while later when her group did their presentation her whole body ached to be part of the fun, but she joined the rest of the class in enthusiastic applause. There were still tears in her eyes, and as I watched her there were tears in my eyes too. I felt exhilarated and a little sad. Whatever had happened to Christi had happened to me too.*

Productive Tensions Around Case Drafts

Diane's case was discussed in three different contexts: 1) regular editor meetings, 2) editor/writer conferences and interviews, and 3) small group collaborative conversations. In each of these settings the differing perspectives, interpretations, and questions prompted tensions which created opportunities for learning. This section examines what occurred during each

discussion of Diane's case. Though most of the teachers in this study had formal editor-writer conferences and collaborative conversations on both their first and second drafts, Diane was only able to participate in the deliberations around her first draft. She had, however, several opportunities to speak informally with each of the editors and was interviewed almost a year after the first draft was completed.

Productive Tensions Among the Editors

When the editors read the narrative, we were impressed by the quality of the writing and level of detail in Diane's descriptions of certain students and teaching events in her classroom, and moved by her honesty about her own ambivalent reactions to what was happening. But we differed in how we perceived using the case. During our meeting in mid-January, I questioned whether the case was too long and should be broken into parts. Though some published cases are much longer than this one (e.g., some of Kleinfeld's cases are 50 pages), this 10-page, single-spaced case was twice as long as most of the others I have published, and I wondered if it was too complex to be used in inservice settings; in my experience in workshop settings, even five pages is too long at times. Furthermore, when I took the perspective of both a neophyte teacher-reader who is considering using groupwork and a teacher-educator who might lead a discussion on the case, I had many questions that needed clarification. Why was Diane such a strong advocate of this kind of groupwork when the narrative appeared fraught with so many problems? Did Roberto's improved language skills and increased participation in groups result substantively in more learning? Was groupwork worth all the trouble if kids like Christi and Bobby appeared to suffer? Did Lisa, Jerome and Shirley's artistic recognition help them do better in their academic studies? What about the impact of groupwork on those students who made only minor appearances in the case? Would a brief elaboration on their story provide a more balanced view of students' experiences in Diane's classroom? In short, what was this a case of and what would we want others to learn from it? The answer to these questions would help us decide if the narrative should be subdivided and/or what information should be added or deleted.

Lotan argued against subdividing the narrative. From her perspective as an expert on groupwork and Complex Instruction, she felt its importance lay in its honest rendering of a range of problems that occur across an entire year. She could see using it as an introduction to a case-

based curriculum on groupwork, because it raised questions on all of the issues that the other authors focused on more closely in their individual narratives. Regarding the other questions I raised, she appreciated my "outsider" perspective on groupwork, but was concerned that adding additional information might detract from the issues raised in an already lengthy narrative.

These tensions, though heated at times, were provocative for all of us. They challenged our understanding of both "what a case is" and what is learned from groupwork. We decided to embed these different perspectives in our respective written feedback sheets (see Appendix B), and discuss them in a joint editor/writer conference the following week. I looked forward to the meeting, in part because the questions I posed on Diane's case mirrored some of my own questions about groupwork. But before our editor/writer conference, Diane had discussed her case with some other teacher-writers in the first planned collaborative conversation.

Productive Tensions During the Collaborative Conversation

During this session, each of the four teachers in the group had approximately 20 minutes to get feedback on their case from their peers. Two of the other teachers in the group were high school English teachers and one was a middle school social studies teacher. Since we had previously sent the case drafts to each member of the group with some guidelines on how to give feedback, the teachers had all read the case and were ready to discuss it. At the beginning of her presentation, Diane apologized to her colleagues for the length of the case.

> *I wrote it for myself, and I didn't intend to do it quite this way, but that was what I did, and the time ran out. So, I'd be particularly interested in advice about how this can be broken into possibly more than one case (collaborative conversation, 1/21/93)*

The discussion began with praise about Diane's case and writing style, but quickly went into the substance of the case. Like the editors, the teachers also grappled with "What is this a case of?" As one teacher read from her feedback, "So much here. Is there too much? Is this the story of Christi or Roberto?" One of the teachers found Christi's story very compelling, especially because it was kind of surprising to see the teacher identify with a student who was so "uncompromising" in her attitude toward groupwork. Others thought she should write a case about someone who "grew through groupwork, like Roberto." Diane agreed:

Because I'm very holistic about things and I look at systems, it's hard for me to separate them; you don't get the full context. But I can understand that for the focus of the casebook, that that's a different me. And so for the needs of the casebook, you're right, maybe Roberto needs to have his story by himself.

The teachers also attended to the writing of the case, pointing to where they needed clarification, what parts they enjoyed the most, and why. At times they read from the text, asked probing questions, and made suggestions about how she should deal with certain kids in the case.

Unfortunately, the conversation was too short. Because of time constraints, they had to move on to the next case before Diane felt finished. She said that she would have preferred to talk "a lot more," and asked for any written comments or suggestions. It appeared that she was still unsettled about how to revise the case during our editor/writer conference the following week.

Productive Tensions in Editor/Writer Conferences

Before our interview, Lotan had asked that I direct the conversation since she knew the students in the case and felt "too close" to the situation. I began by asking Diane about the merits of keeping the case whole or breaking it into parts:

My original intention was to actually do three or four short vignettes...But this is what I needed to write for myself...it comes out of my approach to teaching...the whole picture...real value in looking at the whole classroom. It wasn't just Christi's or Roberto's story....it was the best way for me to reflect on the situation. (editor/writer conference, 2/5/93)

Then we switched to questions about individual kids, and I kept challenging her about Roberto's growth:

J: *My problem is that I don't see from your story that Roberto has become an accepted member of the class.*

D: *OK!*

J: *And if that's the story you want to tell, I don't have enough details. What I have is that Roberto began talking in a group. And that was good. I also find out that at one point, Christi and Bobby didn't really pay any attention to him, even though he talked.*

D: *Right! That's what's real about classrooms. Students like Roberto don't suddenly, in the course of the year, become star students. Those buy-ins*

> *are little increments...he went from being a failing student to being a C/D student....for Roberto, who had never done any work in my class, becoming a willing participant in the projects and doing some of the other kinds of assignments was a great step.*

The conversation then shifted to Lotan's hypothesis that this was not a story of individual kids, but rather about Diane's personal journey. Again I pushed: "[But] if I didn't know you, I wouldn't know how you felt about groupwork," and pointed to places in the narrative that needed elaboration and clarification. Lotan paraphrased my concern and said, "Diane is our star teacher, you know, and this is not a glowing report of Complex Instruction. That's good, really good." And Diane noted:

> *Prior to writing this, I don't think I was as aware of how ambivalent I was. And sometimes still am. Theoretically...I believe in groupwork. I know its value, and yet there's a real side of the teacher that is ambivalent about a lot of the things we've been doing all along...*

She went on to describe the difficulty of making changes when the "old way" is comfortable. Here we see Diane reconstructing her experience — revealing the original experience while bringing in new meanings.

After a few minutes, we changed the topic and I asked several probing questions, such as: "How often do you use groupwork? When do you think that groupwork is useful? Why did you continue to use groupwork in the second year when your narrative appeared to show more problems than success stories?" I explained that these questions were not really addressed in her narrative. This prompted several minutes of descriptive detail about how individual kids responded to group tasks and how she used groupwork for specific purposes. I constantly asked "why" questions and suggested ways to incorporate the additional information into a revised text.

The conversation then moved to why this particular form of groupwork was different from other approaches, specifically to the importance of rich curriculum, differentiated tasks for individual members, and status interventions. I suggested that perhaps if she added some of these insights to her case, it would help me and others understand why she used this kind of groupwork in her classroom. Toward the end of the conference, Diane said that writing this case was painful because she was not currently in the classroom and she realized how much she is attached to and very concerned about these kids:

I realize that I had begun to get stale as a teacher and I didn't want that. This journey was a revitalization for me. It gave me some new tools and new insights at a time when I think I desperately need that; a new way to focus on the classroom.

When the conference was finished, we were all pleased with what had transpired. It appeared as if our questions stimulated Diane not merely to remember her experience, but rather to reconstruct it and gain new understandings that affected our thinking about groupwork as well. But I wondered how she would revise her draft. Though we had made some suggestions for revisions, choosing what story she wanted to tell and what she wanted others to learn from her experience was completely her decision. We didn't have to wait long; a month later she turned in her second draft, reluctantly it appeared. To our surprise, this one was a much briefer narrative focused only on Roberto.[3] When I read it, I realized how much was lost without the complexity of the whole class and understood why Lotan had argued to keep the case whole. Furthermore, this case "of" Roberto didn't contribute much that was new to our casebook on groupwork; several other teachers had written cases "of" individual low status students. The unique value of Diane's case was all of the individual stories that were embedded in her story.

At an editors' meeting, we agreed that Diane had done us a favor by isolating Roberto's story, because we could see how much was lost without the context of the whole classroom. We asked her to go back to her original and revise it and planned to field test the new narrative in a case discussion with other teachers. Later we discovered that she had submitted the second draft on Roberto because of advice given to her during her collaborative conversation and learned that she was angry at herself for submitting just part of the story she wanted to tell (interview, 1/12/94).

When she turned in her final case, she seemed pleased with the result. By elaborating on the group experiences of some of the minor characters in her story, providing more information on some of the particular tasks, and highlighting the requirements for intellectually engaging group tasks, she portrayed a more balanced picture of how she had grappled with the problems of adopting this new form of groupwork. We were enthused about the educative value this case could have for other teachers.

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[3] The decision to focus on Roberto had been made during the collaborative conversation, though we had not known about that at this time.

Several months later, however, when I read the transcript of the editor/writer conference in preparation for this paper, I was struck by how challenging I had been and was concerned about how Diane had reacted. Was I too confrontational? Did my challenges assist Diane to deepen her understanding of her teaching and of groupwork? If so, how? Might the case writing experience encourage her to do anything different in her classroom? With some trepidation, I called and arranged for a visit, and was delighted to discover that she looked forward to rehashing the experience. She noted that during the time she revised her case, she had conducted several workshops and worked individually with teachers as a staff developer for Complex Instruction, and had referred to the case on a number of occasions.

When I began the interview — almost a year after the first draft was completed — with my concern about the nature of the probing questions, Diane said that she remembered only feeling sensitive about my probes regarding Roberto: "Most of us in the classroom are just grateful for those few moments of incremental growth" (interview, 1/21/94). After explaining that I was only trying to get inside her head so that others would understand, she elaborated. Though she had not known it at the time, some of my most challenging questions had forced her to question many of her assumptions during her experience as a CI staff developer. For example, she re-evaluated her thrill with Roberto's small increments of growth when she tried to persuade one of the teachers she supervised that it's not enough just to participate on a project:

> *I saw that there wasn't any substance to what the kid was doing...and I tried to help Steve (the teacher) see that just participating wasn't enough...So if I were teaching Roberto now, it wouldn't be enough just to make the kinds of progress that he did.*

As Diane talked about how the staff development experience caused her to re-evaluate certain assumptions, she noted that the case had provided the seed that enabled her to think about Roberto's growth in a different way.

> *I may be finished with the case, in a sense but it's how that case comes back to me as I'm teaching the next group that will be interesting for me.*

This statement suggests that Diane sees the way that her case experience might ripple through her teaching in the future in ways that deepen her intellectual understanding about her practice and now understands the value of participation.

Probing further, I asked what stood out as the most important lesson she learned from writing her case.

> *One of the things that happened to me during the whole case process, and through various versions and conversations [about the other kids in my classroom], was how much I became convinced of...looking at classrooms as a system [instead of relationships with individual kids].....But I didn't know how I felt about that until I started to write this case...So from that I have thought about my teaching more carefully, about why I teach, and why I want to go back into teaching. And in fact, I think this case has a lot to do with my choosing to go back into the classroom, because it provided me an avenue for really thinking about not only why I do groupwork, but why I teach...and what it means to me. (bold, my own)*

Here Diane reveals the extent to which this case writing process had systematically shaped how she had reflected on her teaching. We knew that Diane was considering applying to doctoral oral programs and were intrigued to see that this experience had contributed to her decision to go back to the classroom. She also spoke about how she used illustrations from her case when she worked with teachers in her capacity as a Complex Instruction staff developer, trying to help them think about their classes in a different way:

> *I've talked about how writing this case was such a mind opener for me. It was like I could read the case and see the little play, and think about my whole process of teaching.*

At that point, I referred to her final draft and noted that, in response to my request, she had elaborated on some of the minor characters in her draft: "What was that like?" She reported that although the teachers in the collaborative conversation suggested that she could ignore these students, she enjoyed it; it gave her an opportunity to get a whole picture of her classroom. It appeared that our tough questioning empowered her to articulate and adhere to the importance of portraying her classroom as a coherent system.

I then asked the tough question, the one that had been so problematic a year ago: "Can you be more explicit now why you do groupwork?"

> *D: After CI, with the richness of the curriculum, made me think that perhaps groupwork could have intellectual, substantive value...Before, I don't think that at any point I thought groupwork was intellectually valid.*
>
> *J: Did you understand that when you were in the classroom?*

D: *It began in the classroom, but I didn't understand it then. It takes two years of CI to really understand...The content of the units was new. I needed to do more thinking about it.*

J: *Do you think kids learn better in groups?*

D: *Yes, I think they learn some things better in groups. It's potentially a powerful strategy, but it needs to be used in consciously and intentionally well-designed activities. I feel that students can take rich materials and work with them in superficial ways. That's why I learned that my role is enhanced, because I need to guide the level of depth if the class is going to be expected to pursue something. So I think of groupwork now as a way of getting into some very complex kinds of conceptual learning.*

J: *What's interesting is that, when you wrote the case, none of this was there. What seemed to be important was your grappling with a different role as teacher.*

D: *And that's very much where I was that year with this new process.*

J: *But now you see it differently because you've done it longer?*

D: *Well, more years with it and more reasons to have to think about it.*

These insights were revealing. They highlight the relationship of pedagogical content knowledge to the pedagogy of using groupwork. To teach a unit well, teachers need to know the content of the subject matter, have a repertoire of particular ways to teach specific topics, be able to tailor the instruction to individuals and groups of students, and understand how diverse students can contribute to their own and their classmates' learning. It appears that, during the first year of implementing the CI curriculum units, Diane's energies were focused on the general pedagogy of managing CI groups, ensuring that all children not only made a contribution to their group but were recognized for it. She hadn't had time to learn much about the content of the units and was unsure how to guide her students' search into deeper understanding of the content. As a result, she was ambivalent about how to assert her role as teacher. During the second year, however, when she was more familiar with the management issues and had more time to learn about the content, she not only appreciated how groups can contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter, she realized that her enhanced role as teacher was to guide the level of depth of that understanding. These findings on the amount of time and effort it takes for teachers

to make radical instructional changes are consistent with other studies (e.g., Blumenfeld, Krajcik, Marx & Soloway, in press; Richardson, 1994).

Towards the end of the interview we discussed why this case was so painful to write:

> *There was a lot of emotion in writing the case, going back into that year a year or so after it occurred, and seeing the difference between myself at one point and when I wrote the case, um, but also being in a process of change, not just because I left the classroom, because in a sense, I had real feeling that this has taken me on a road. I can't ever go back to the things the way they were. That's always upsetting...I didn't realize how much upheaval CI had created for me until I wrote this case. It was writing the case and answering questions about it that I realize what had happened. I didn't know it at the time.*

Final Reflections: Six Months Later

After completing my analysis of Diane's learning from the case writing process for the preparation of this paper, I asked if she would read and react to it. I also asked whether she wanted to co-author the paper and contribute a piece in her own words that would act as a kind of epilogue, six months after the final interview. What follows is Diane's reflection on her experience.

Epilogue

Diane Kepner, Mt. Diablo School District

While I was writing "We're All In This Together" I felt a real tension about certain aspects of the process. One aspect was the conflict I felt between the story that I most needed to tell, i.e., the story of the whole classroom, and what I perceived a case was expected to be. On the one hand I had decided that only a look at the whole classroom could do justice to the complexity of groupwork and I initially wrote the case to satisfy my own investigative needs. On the other, collaborative feedback from my colleagues in the project reinforced my perception that cases needed to be more tightly focused and that mine was too long and ambiguous. Furthermore, I interpreted the feedback from the editors and their confusion about what to do with my case as a subtle way of telling me that it just didn't work in the context of the casebook.

Given the additional constraints of crafting for publication and the pressure to finish up within deadlines, more than once I considered dropping out of the project. But the growth that I felt I was making as an individual and the satisfaction I was getting from being part of the group of teachers struggling and risking together overcame my desire to defect. I then attempted to resolve my own tension by writing my second draft specifically so that it would fit with those of the other teachers. I was very conscious of not wanting to use the casebook as a personal forum

and, although this second draft was less satisfying, I felt more confidence in its appropriateness. Nonetheless, in the end, I was relieved to go back to the original and pleased that the story I wanted to tell would also be appropriate for others. I think that the constraints of time and audience were probably necessary in order for me to achieve enough distance and objectivity to eventually bring the writing to a satisfactory closure.

Now six months after the last interview and more than a year since writing the case, I find it continues to be a valuable resource for me. The process of reframing my personal experience into something that could be useful to others forced me to consider seemingly isolated incidents as part of larger, more fundamental issues. At first, I was annoyed with some of the probing questions Judy asked; the answers seemed obvious to me. But as I struggled to articulate those answers and make them intelligible to others, they became insufficient. I found myself digging more and more deeply into a nest of previously unexamined assumptions than I would have otherwise.

As I have returned to teaching at a different school, in a different subject area, and a different grade level, I think my current reflections about teaching are more purposeful and less self-indulgent. Now as I make notes about events within my classroom I find myself reframing those experiences around central questions and issues with broad implications. One mental strategy has been to ask myself, "If this were a case, what would it be a case of? What questions need to be asked? What would others see here that I'm overlooking?" Through this rethinking I am currently trying to tease out some significant issues for more intensive investigation.

During the forthcoming year I will be working with two other teachers to pilot integrated teaming in ninth grade. I want to introduce case writing as a means of enhancing our dialogue and hope to see it evolve into forms of teacher research. Within our high school we are seeking to build a community of educators dedicated to rethinking old assumptions and exploring new options. I hope we will be able to link with similar communities throughout our area. (6/25/94)

Interactive Case Writing as Research

This case of one teacher's case writing experience over time illustrates the power that collaborative case writing can have on a teacher's professional growth. Writing the case enabled this teacher to move from her subjective, internal struggle with groupwork to a more objective, external perspective from which she could critically examine what could be learned from her experience. What becomes clear in this careful analysis of case writing is that there is a kind of writing imperative, which retroactively transforms the teaching experience into teacher research. When she reconstructs and reconstitutes these experiences, they become the focus of systematic investigation.

Typically, teachers who embark on investigations look ahead. They generate some questions from events in their classrooms, gather data, analyze the findings, and then alter their practice based on their new learning. What teacher case writing may do is to make teacher research retroactive, transforming the experiences undergone into a source of inquiry and discovery. The resulting case leaves a legacy of that learning and becomes a catalyst for others' inquiry and discovery.

The initial intent of this research was to examine, in detail, the tensions that occurred during one teacher's case writing experience to discover what processes and experiences contribute to a case writer's professional growth. As the analysis of this case progressed, however, I discovered that I was exploring my own growth as editor as well as that of the case writer's. In fact, I would argue, all of the participants — the editors and the other case writers as well as Diane — developed deeper understandings of their practice as a result of both the tensions that stemmed from the case and their interactions with one another. Diane examined some of her basic assumptions of student learning and enhanced her own conceptual understanding about why she uses groupwork; the editors reexamined their assumptions about "case" and purposes of groupwork and engaged in their own "practical inquiry" (Fenstermacher, 1994; Richardson, 1994) into their conduct as staff developers; and the other case writers had an opportunity to deepen their own understandings of their practice as they probed Diane's.

This type of learning may be an example of multiple "zones of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978 in Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Brown, 1992), where each participant operates within his or her own zone and helps to scaffold the others' understandings. According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development is the distance between what a learner can accomplish independently and what can be learned in collaboration with others. This notion of multiple, overlapping zones is consistent with the principle of distributed expertise, where everyone is an expert in something and can contribute to the understanding of others. In mutual collaboration, someone with expertise calls forth new information from another with different, but overlapping expertise. Each responds in turn to the other, calling forth new information and skills. The new information produces more complex conceptualizations of the problematic situation. In our situation, as individuals reached the limit of understanding beyond which they could cope independently, they grappled together with the tensions created from differing

perspectives on the case, increased their own learning, and developed a shared understanding in the process. Ironically, these principles of multiple overlapping zones of proximal development and distributed expertise, which we invoke to discuss how a group of teachers collaboratively study their own practice, are also the foundations of successful groupwork.

Were there certain questions and deliberations that appeared to trigger reflection, analysis, and systematic investigation more than others? The data suggest that whereas questions of clarification yielded important additional information to the case, other questions led to profound learning. These questions appear to be most important in stimulating deep, reflective thinking in the case writers. They include a focus on: 1) "What is this a case of?," 2) a concern for other audiences, and 3) the breakdowns of her classroom. Preliminary analysis of data in the larger study confirms that examination of these issues was also critical to the other teacher's learning.

The focus on "What is this a case of?" refers to how the problems, topics or issues depicted in the narrative are representative of situations that arise with some frequency in other settings. That is, what makes this case more than Diane's difficult year and makes it a case with value for others, a case from which others might learn? As with all rich cases, Diane's case is "of" many things, such as: the difficulty of creating meaningful groupwork tasks; the challenge of evaluating student growth; the dilemmas of changing the teacher's role from deliverer of content to facilitator of learning; the problems of responding to the dominating, high achieving student; or the frustrations of supporting the low status student. In our discussions, however, we collaboratively determined that though each of these topics was important in and of themselves, they were all elements of the "big idea" of the case — the problem faced by veteran teachers in adapting to a radically different kind of instruction of this particular kind. Once we had made this decision, we could address what detail needed to be added or deleted to develop the narrative into a teaching case from which others could learn. As we examined the case through these lenses, we probed more deeply into those factors that make this kind of teaching such a challenge to all teachers. But who are those "others" for whom the case is written? As soon as we think about a case as an exemplar, we must think about our audience.

As Diane had reiterated several times, she wrote the first draft for herself and was pleased to discover that the story she wanted to tell would be appropriate for others. But when we took

the stance of preservice teachers or veterans who wanted to make a similar change in their own instruction, the concern for audience became consequential. What kinds of misconceptions might the audience have about groupwork, about kids in general, or about the kids in her class? What kinds of groupwork might the audience already use that would interfere with learning this form of instruction? How might the instructional goals be similar or different? Why are some tasks more suited to groupwork than others? What does one need to know and understand about distributed expertise to ensure that all kids not only contribute to group tasks but are valued for their contributions? How does the role of the teacher differ from more traditional forms of group instruction? If one of the goals of this form of groupwork is to teach critical understanding and reasoning, how much content knowledge does a teacher need to know in order to teach the new curriculum meaningfully? Thinking about "audience" pushes the case writer to think like a teacher about the case as a lesson or curriculum. When we ask what our readers are already likely to know or believe, we are asking why the lessons of a case are hard to learn — for others as well as ultimately ourselves. This, too, led to much deeper and more critical thinking by the case writer. The old adage that the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else holds here as well. To understand your own case more deeply, teach it to someone else.

Grappling with these questions often led to discussions that dealt with the breakdowns in Diane's classroom that were painful, often poignant. More is learned by contemplating the problematic than from celebrating the successful. As Diane noted in one of the interviews, she had never realized until she wrote her case, how much adopting Complex Instruction had disrupted her classroom. Intellectually, she sensed that this form of groupwork was better for her students. But she was unprepared for some of the results. Students who had been stars when they had control over their own learning became troublemakers when they were dependent on the contributions of others. Low status students were either ignored by their group when they tried to contribute or caused problems when they refused to contribute. Finding opportunities to intervene and support these low status students proved frustrating when they appeared to do nothing that was worthy of recognition or praise. And even when the groups appeared to be working — when students collaborated with one another and were motivated to search out answers for themselves — figuring out how to enact her role as a facilitator of student learning without providing answers was surprisingly challenging and occasionally painful. Yet these were

the issues that seemed to provoke the most consequential learning. As many theorists, such as Dewey, have noted, learning becomes possible when the habits that worked will in the past no longer accomplish our new purposes. When classrooms began to break down, they create opportunities for teacher learning. We are becoming increasingly convinced that analysis of these breakdowns, though often painful, leads to the most constructive learning.

This study of Diane's case writing is an example of a valuable kind of research, in which the writing of cases is understood as an occasion for teacher learning, a strategic site for professional development. Lauren Resnick (1987) put it well:

> What we require now are studies of the development of competence in people who are *becoming* experts in their fields. We also must mount detailed examinations of people coping with situations of breakdown or transition in their work (p. 18).

In our future work, we intend to gather more cases of teacher learning to accomplish radically new forms of pedagogy. From such research, we hope to build a deeper theoretical understanding of how teachers become more accomplished in their work. Such theory can contribute to a more solid foundation for systematic programs of teacher professional development.

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Appendix A

Case Writers

Name	Grade	Content	School/District	Years of Experience	Source of Groupwork
CHRIS ALGER	8	English/History Core	Claremont Middle School Oakland Unified School Dist.	4	CI*
DORIS ASH	2,3,5,6	Science: Resource Teacher/ Research Assistant	John Swett Elementary Oakland Unified School Dist.	20+	FCL**
CAROLE CHIN***	4	All Subjects	Malcolm X School Berkeley Unified School Dist.	22	Bay Area Writing Project
MARIA DEL RIO		Bilingual, Elementary School	Alexander Rose Elementary Milpitas Unified School Dist.	5	CI
ANNE S. FROST	8	Language Arts/Social Studies	Kennedy Middle School Redwood City School District	5+	Bay Area district workshops
PAULA GOCKER***	10-12	English	El Cerrito High School Richmond School District	16	Bay Area Writing Project
DIANE KEPNER	7-8	Social Studies	Riverview Middle School Mt. Diablo School District	15	CI
SUSAN MERCEIN****	9-12	Social Studies	San Francisco	Intern tchr. @ Stanford	
TOM MEYER	9-10, 11	English	Aragon High School San Mateo Union H.S. District	6	District workshops Bay Area Writing Proj.
GRACE MORIZAWA	2	Science	Emerson Elementary Oakland Unified School Dist.	17	Bay Area Writing Project

* CI - Complex Instruction
** FCL - Fostering a Community of Learners
*** Dropped project
**** Moved to the East Coast

Appendix A

Case Writers (cont'd)

Name	Grade	Content	School/District	Years of Experience	Source of Groupwork
TOBY POLLOCK	8	Social Studies	Kennedy Middle School Redwood City School District	15	District workshops
KEN PORUSH	8	Science (Physical/Earth)	Steinbeck Middle School San Jose Unified School Dist.	4	CI
MARTY RUTHERFORD	3, 5-6	All Subjects	John Swett Elementary Oakland Unified School Dist.	8	FCL, CI, Bay Area workshops
SUSAN SHULTZ	9-12	Chemistry	Menlo-Atherton High School Sequoia Union H. S. Dist.	7	CI
CAROLYN WADE	9, 9-11	Social Studies, Math, Reading, English: Resource Teacher	Carlmont School Sequoia High School District	13	District sponsored
JILL WALKER	2	All Subjects	John Swett Elementary Oakland Unified School Dist.	18	FCL, CI

APPENDIX B

FEEDBACK ON FIRST CASE DRAFT

CASE REVIEW FORM
Cases on Groupwork

Name: Diane Kepner
Date: 1/19/93

Reviewer: Judy Shulman
Untitled, draft #1

Comments on the way it was written

1. What was your overall reaction? (Thoughts and feelings?)

Diane, you have written a truly compelling piece. It teaches us about so many things–about the value and reasons for appropriate groupwork; about the difficulties for some students, and opportunities for growth for others; about your challenges in transforming your role as one who teaches by telling to one to teaches by facilitating; and more. What makes giving you feedback particularly difficult for me is that, while I value your narrative because you touch on so many areas in such an honest and compassionate way, I wonder how to use it as a teaching case. Should we let it alone and treat it like one of Judy Kleinfeld's 50 page cases? Should we divide it up into sections, with opportunities for analytical discussion after each section? Or should we craft perhaps two cases out of this, one focusing on the themes of Dusty and you, which you so skillfully interweave, and another focusing on Ernesto and some of the other kids.

Since I am uncertain and can go in many directions, I'd like to first give you my feedback about what I think may be missing information and what needs clarification, and then solicit your help in deciding how to proceed.

Are you a language arts teacher? You allude to it, but it's not clear. Can you fit in something about the context of your classroom?

p. 2: You describe some of the reasons why you like CI, responsibility for own learning, dependent on others in the group, etc. Did you consider student learning when you grabbed on to CI? Did the fact that CI offered a particular curriculum help? You say on p. 4 that you don't use groups every day. About how often do you use groups? Is CI the only kind of groups you use?

You described a first introductory unit on poetry. Can you say a little more about the poetry unit? How did you introduce it? What kind of learning did you seek? Did you think about that? Did your students have the requisite knowledge to create "lines of poetry that would bring out the sound and rhythm of the activities in the one they chose" (I'm not sure I understand this).

p. 4: When Dusty's group fizzled, can you be more explicit about what you "wondered" about? Was their group the only group that didn't have much to present? Did you consider about the kind of learning that went on? Or, were you most concerned at this point about the groups interacting well (which is what you wrote about).

p. 5: You say that as they gained confidence in the process etc., "the quality of their work improved." What does this mean? Can you be more specific? When you say that you "explored each unit through a lot of different methods, most of them fairly traditional...then culminate it with an intensive investigation," is that the CI part? (maybe we have to deal with how CI units

interact with more traditional approaches in another place...perhaps a footnote?

When you say that Dusty and Ernesto ended up in the same group...how do you choose groups? Now you say that Ernesto has some strong opinions. When did this change occur? When did he begin participating? He might be talking, but has his status really risen with Dusty and Tisha if they don't want to pay attention to him? How has his academic learning been influenced by his increased talking? [I note that you respond to this on p. 6], but wonder if you should say more] Diane, as I ask these questions, I'm wondering if a case should focus on Ernesto..

p. 7 (bottom). You say that Ernesto's valuable suggestions were ignored. What made them valuable?

p. 8 (top) Do we need more detail here, about what were "all the important features that they had overlooked?"

Overall: It appears that Dusty never really adjusted to groupwork. Did she ever get the choice to work alone? When you pulled her out of groups, what was she accountable for? Your end was a wrenching end to this story. I want to start discussing Dusty, but may need more information in the case to be able to discuss substantively how to treat the Dustys of the world. It appears that this kind of groupwork just may not be good for Dusty or Bobby. Is that the story you want to tell? What about Ernesto? Did his academic work improve? When he began talking more in groups, did his status increase (doesn't seem that way)? I also wonder about Aaron. If Aaron only contributed when he thought you were watching, how did groupwork benefit him or the others in his group? Was he as distracted in nongroupwork situations? How should we discuss Aaron....I guess I'm feeling that when you introduced the other students–Bobby, Aaron, Lisa, Jerome, Nicole–they really added to the narrative, but I don't have enough information to discuss them. Should we provide more information? What's the story you want to tell about these students?

Well Diane, now that I have finished this feedback, I'm still not convinced of a particular approach for change. My question for you is, if you make a two-part case, is there another case to be made? Like Rachel, I am enthralled by your narrative and what it can teach us. And I certainly don't feel like an expert in making this decision. Please join us in deciding how to proceed.

January 20, 1993

Dear Diane,

As you know, I am writing you this letter instead of "filling out" the feedback form that Judy and I decided upon. It was just too hard for me to be that formal and somewhat impersonal with you. Also as you know (we have talked about this somewhat), your case made for very emotional reading for me for a number of reasons: because I knew your kids personally, because I've "used" them as cases or illustrations myself, because I never realized what Dusty meant to you and because I feel so close to you as a teacher, and because the dilemmas you raise are too close for comfort for me too.

Now that I've reread your case a number of times and even put it aside for a few days, I think I am ready to talk about it somewhat coherently although not unequivocally (I can't believe I'm saying this....).

Your story (I am almost convinced that it is not a "case" by the stringent definition of the term) includes all the major elements and dilemmas associated with groupwork. I can't think of anything that you do not touch upon, in one way or the other, explicitly or implicitly: why groupwork, the place of groupwork in the larger picture, role of the teacher, the different kinds of kids in groupwork, holding groups and individuals responsible, kids grappling with new information, new concepts, seeing kids in class and outside, committees, colleagues, initiative...in short, everything. And the greatest thing is that you are an incredibly skilled writer and everything in the end comes together and makes perfect sense.

I could see myself using this case as an overall introduction to groupwork - something that says it all at first and then can be taken apart to address specific issues. I am not sure what that would mean for the casebook, since I would use it almost as a piece for good, old-fashioned text analysis rather than as a "teaching case." (If this doesn't make a whole lot of sense, lets pick it up in our oral session.)

I understand very well Judy's and Jennie's point about making two or even three cases out of it, although I suspect that by focusing each of those two or three, the story would loose much of its "literary" strength. Of course, the final decision is yours (isn't that a cop-out?).